Los artículos del Padre Vili Lehtoranta contra la Tesis, así como otros de sus textos, fueron eliminados por orden de Monseñor Charles McGuire. Nuestro grupo de inteligencia acaba de recuperar los artículos eliminados y ahora están disponibles para todo México. SGG ha caído y ahora está con la Tesis. La obra de Monseñor Dolan contra la Tesis fue destruida por sus sucesores. Dios hará justicia!

https://web.archive.org/web/20250119063448/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/freedom-summer-60-years-ago

https://web.archive.org/web/20250318173018/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/father-ojeka-s-road-from-thechurch-of-belial-to-the-church-of-christ

https://web.archive.org/web/20250219062358/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/short-movie-review-inside-out2

https://web.archive.org/web/20250318173505/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/the-priest-and-the-oblateretreats

https://web.archive.org/web/20250219052519/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/the-assassination-of-olof-palme

https://web.archive.org/web/20250219053707/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/my-take-on-vigan%C3%B2-the-bergoglian-church-is-a-false-sect

https://web.archive.org/web/20250214174243/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/father-cekada-s-collectedwritings-back-in-print

https://web.archive.org/web/20250219050019/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/teens-and-faith-podcast

https://web.archive.org/web/20250119063420/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/the-best-way-to-win-anargument

https://web.archive.org/web/20250219062326/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/little-house-on-the-prairie-50-years

https://web.archive.org/web/20250119063050/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/many-waters-cannot-quenchcharity

https://web.archive.org/web/20250219043633/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/support-the-oblate-sisters

https://web.archive.org/web/20250318164342/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/the-best-christmas-pageantever

https://web.archive.org/web/20250119073716/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/the-living-church-latin-and-thedead-classical-latin

https://web.archive.org/web/20250219053551/https://www.fatherlehtoranta.com/post/george-or-washington-whycatholics-can-defend-the-american-revolution

Short Explanation of Why We Reject the Thesis of Guérard des Lauriers

The position of the priests and seminarians of St. Gertrude the Great Roman Catholic Church is that John XXIII and his successors in the anti-papacy are public heretics and apostates. They, therefore, are not members of the Catholic Church, and for that reason cannot be legally or validly elected into any office in the Church, nor be designated to receive any office in the Church.

It is the teaching of the Church that in Baptism a person becomes a member of the Mystical Body of Christ (the Church) by adherence to the Catholic Faith.[1] He also is united to the Soul of the Church, which is the Holy Ghost, by receiving sanctifying grace.[2] It is possible to be member of one without being member of the other. A person in the state of mortal sin loses sanctifying grace, and is disunited from the soul of the Church; but he is still member of the Church *externally* as long as he keeps the Catholic faith.[3] Also heretics and schismatics in good faith (i.e. in the state of invincible ignorance) are members of the soul of the Church as long as they don't commit a mortal sin; but they are not members of the *body* of the Church.[4]

We call the Thesis of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers a theological error.[5] We say this because it claims that a heretic and apostate—Bergoglio in our times—can be validly elected to the papacy.[6] This goes against the teaching of the divine law and the Canon Law that public heretics and apostates are not members of the Church externally.[7] The Thesis claims that John XXIII and his successors, Bergoglio included, are members of the Church externally (or we must at least treat them such without the declaration of the Church), while in truth it is only Catholics in a state of mortal sin

[1] "So, just as in the true community of the faithful of Christ there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one Baptism, so there can be only one faith [cf. Eph. 4:5]; and so he who refuses to hear the Church, as the Lord bids 'let him be as the heathen and publican' [cf. Matt. 18:17]." (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, DZ 2286)

[2] "And after Christ was glorified on the Cross, His Spirit is communicated to the Church in the richest effusion, that she and her individual members may more and more daily become like our Savior. It is the Spirit of Christ that has made us God's adopted sons." (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, DZ 2288)

[3] "The Church Militant is composed of two kinds of persons, the good and the bad. Both profess the same faith and partake of the same sacraments; but they differ in their manner of life and morality." (Roman Catechism, The Ninth Article, #7, p. 101)

[4] "The same in its own way must be said of the Church, inasmuch as she is the general help to salvation. Therefore, that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church actually as a member, but it is necessary that he be united to her at least by desire and longing. But this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens, but when a person is under invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire, so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul, whereby a person wishes his will to be conformed to the will of God." (Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston, 1949, DS 3870)

[5] A theological error is the denial of a theological doctrine which is morally certain that the Church considers as either belonging to the integrity of the Faith, or being logically connected with a revealed truth. (Wilhelm & Scannell 1906, 90)

[6] Father Filippo Maroto, professor of Canon Law in the Pontifical College of St. Athanasius, consultant of the Holy Office, who worked in the preparation of the 1917 Code, wrote: "A) The validity of the election, as regards the person elected, depends only upon divine law—in other words, no other impediments except those laid down by divine law, render the election of a Roman Pontiff invalid… Therefore, for valid election of a Roman Pontiff now it is required and suffices that the person elected be:… c) A member of the Church, for he who does not belong to the Church is considered incapable of possessing jurisdiction, especially ordinary jurisdiction, and cannot actually be the head of the Church. For this reason, infidels and the unbaptized can in no way be validly elected. So too, the divine law itself bars heretics and schismatics from the supreme Pontificate. (Maroto 1919, 171-172, #784; Cekada 2021, 248)

[7] Father Conte a Coronata wrote: "No restrictions exist anymore concerning who can be elected to the office of the Roman Pontiff from the part of the human law. …Precaution of the office of the primacy: what is decreed concerning this precaution by the divine law. …In the same way for the validity is required, that the elect be a member of the Church; therefore heretics and apostates, at least public ones, are excluded." (Conte a Coronata 1950, 366; 370) Monsignor Gerard van Noort writes: "By the term *public heretics* at this point we mean all who *externally* deny a truth (for example Mary's Divine Maternity), or several truths of divine and Catholic faith, regardless of whether the one denying does so ignorantly and innocently (a merely *material* heretic), or willfully and guiltily (a *formal* heretic)." (Van Noort 1959, 241)

who retain the membership of the Church externally but not internally. When a Catholic commits sins of heresy, schism, or apostasy, not only does he lose sanctifying grace in his soul, but he is also cut off from the external membership of the Church; and this happens automatically, without the need of any declaration on the part of the Church.[8]

We also call the Thesis a theological error, because it has invented the idea of an obstacle John XXIII and his successors supposedly posited, so that they were lawfully and validly elected, but did not receive authority. In truth, Canon Law of 1917 and all its commentators teach unanimously, that if person is capable of being elected Pope, he is able also to *become* Pope.[9] This is because the

---

[8] Regarding Pope who becomes a heretic, St. Antoninus, Doctor of the Church, writes in his *Summæ Sacræ Theologiæ*, pars III, titulus XXII, caput IV, § 3: "When he falls into heresy, then he for this fact is severed from the Church, and ceases to be her head, and is deposed *de facto*, not *de jure*, because 'he that doth not believe, is already judged' [John 3:18] and this *de jure*; but this is before the judgment, because he who himself is a heretic, is severed from the Church; and the head cannot be severed from the body, as long as it be the head of that body from which it is severed. Therefore the Pope for this reason ceases to be the head of the body of the Church; and thus a heretic cannot be or remain Pope, because the keys of the Church cannot be had outside the Church." (Antoninus 1740, 1208)

Another Saint and Doctor, St. Robert Bellarmine, writes: "The opinion of more recent learned men is the same, like John Driedonus, who in book 4 of his book on Scripture and the dogmas of the Church (in chapter 2, part 2, sentence 2) teaches that only those are separated from the Church, who are either expelled, like the excommunicated, or of themselves depart and oppose the Church, like heretics and schismatics. And in the seventh sentence he says that in those who have departed from the Church absolutely no spiritual power remains over those who are in the Church. Melchior Cano in book 4, chapter 2 on theological locations, teaches that heretics are not parts of the Church, nor members, and in the last chapter at argument 12 he says that it cannot even be thought that someone could be the Head and Pope, who is neither a member or a part of the Church. And in the same place he teaches in clear words that occult heretics are still parts and members of the Church, and so an occult heretical Pope is still Pope. Others have the same opinion and we cited them in book 1 on the Church. The foundation of this opinion is that a manifest heretic in no way is a member of the Church, that is, neither in mind nor in body, neither with internal union nor external. For bad Catholics also are united and are members, in mind through faith, and in body through the confession of faith, and through participation in the visible sacraments. Occult heretics are united and are members, but only with an external union, just as on the other hand, good catechumens belong to the Church with an internal union only, but not external; but manifest heretics belong in no way, as has already been proven." (Bellarmine 2016, 839-840)

Msgr. van Noort writes: "It is *certain* that public, formal heretics are severed from Church membership. It is the *more common* opinion that public, material heretics are likewise excluded from membership. Theological reasoning for this opinion is quite strong: if public material heretics remained members of the Church, the visibility and unity of Christ's Church would perish. If these purely material heretics were considered members of the Catholic Church in the strict sense of the term, how would one ever locate the 'Catholic Church'? How would the Church be one body? How would it profess one faith? Where would be its visibility? Where its unity? For these and other reasons we find it difficult to see any intrinsic probability to the opinion which would allow for *public* heretics, in good faith, remaining members of the Church." (Van Noort 1959, 241-242)

The Roman Catechism teaches: "It follows that there are but three categories of persons excluded from her pale: first, infidels; secondly, heretics and schismatics; and thirdly, excommunicated persons. …Heretics and schismatics, because they have separated from the Church and belong to her only as deserters belong to the army from which they have deserted. It is not, however, to be denied that they are still subject to the jurisdiction of the Church, inasmuch as they are liable to have judgment passed on their opinions, to be visited with spiritual punishments, and to be denounced with anathema. Finally, excommunicated persons, because excluded by her sentence from the number of her children, they do not belong to her communion until restored by repentance." (Roman Catechism 1984, 103)

Finally, Pope Pius XII teaches in *Mystici Corporis*: "Nor must one think that the Body of the Church…is made up during the days of its earthly pilgrimage only of members conspicuous for their holiness, or that it consists only of those whom God has predestined to eternal happiness. …For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature to sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy." (DS 3803) He also says: "Actually only those are to be numbered among the members of the Church who have received the laver of regeneration and profess the true faith, and have not, to their misfortune, separated themselves from the structure of the Body, or for very serious sins have not been excluded by lawful authority." (DZ 2286; DS 3802) Notice that from these quotes we see that the Church, in no unclear words, teaches that separation from the Catholic Church can happen **either** by excommunication from the part of the Church **or** by one separating himself from her by committing a sin of schism, heresy, or apostasy.

[9] The Code of Canon Law (CCL), canon 219: "The Roman Pontiff, legitimately elected, immediately upon accepting the election, obtains by divine law the full power of supreme jurisdiction." Pius XII also taught in his *Vacantis Apostolicæ Sedis* 1945, #101: "Having obtained this consent within the time limit, insofar as it is necessary, determined by the prudent judgment of the cardinals, the one who is elected through the greater number of votes, is immediately the true Pope, and actually acquires and can exercise full and absolute jurisdiction over the whole world." (AAS 3/1946, p. 97) Furthermore, Father John Berthram O'Connell writes in his *The Celebration of Mass*, that the priest is to mention the name of the Pope in the Canon "once his election has been announced." (O'Connell 1940, 87)

Church does not, and indeed could not, make decisions about the internal state or intentions of a person; what she looks at is if her members are Catholic or not, i.e. do they have the Catholic faith and belong to the Mystical Body of Christ externally.[10]

We also hold the Thesis of Guérard des Lauriers to be illogical and erroneous, because it teaches that through material apostolic succession Bergoglio legally designates and upholds the apostolicity of the Church. But the very notion of material apostolic succession is that it is valid but *illegal*. It is not possible to have apostolic succession which is merely material but still legal. And this is because the *very thing* which makes the succession material is illegality; and what makes it formal is legality.[11] Furthermore, it is downright absurd to think that a person who does not hold the faith handed down from the Apostles, could be a successor of the Apostles.

Since we also hold that Novus Ordo ordinations and consecrations are invalid, we truly say, that when it comes to upholding the apostolicity of the true Church of Christ, Bergoglio has nothing to give and nothing to lose.[12]

Also, since the Thesis holds that Bergoglio and his bishops receive legal designation to maintain the apostolicity from the part of the Church, then the only logical conclusion would be that we, the Traditional Bishops and priests, have *not* received legal designation. Just like it is impossible there be two heads in a family, two presidents in a state, or two gods in heaven, it is intrinsically impossible that if Bergoglio and his bishops have been legally sent, there could exist some other legal line of succession besides them. Furthermore, the Novus Ordo church excommunicated Abp. Thuc, Bp. Guérard, and Bp. Carmona, and declared their orders illegal.[13] If the post-Vatican II Church has power to designate, it must also have power to non-designate. By upholding to the legality of Bergoglio, the only logical conclusion would be that the traditional clergy is *illegal*, that is, outside the true Church and true apostolicity. And indeed, this is a position which is defended by the Novus Ordo and the R&R position; but it must be rejected by the Sedevacantists.

Lastly, one cannot see these differences among the traditional clergy as something one can just express his opinion about, like a debate about the working of God's grace in a soul. These questions pertain to where is the true Church of Christ, which obviously affects the salvation of souls.[14] It is to

---

[10] St. Thomas Aquinas writes in *Summa Theologiæ* (Second Part of the Second Part, Question 60, article 2, reply to Objection 1): "In these words our Lord forbids rash judgment which is about the inward intention, or other uncertain things, as Augustine states." Msgr. van Noort also states: "Once again, it makes no difference whether a person who breaks the bonds of Catholic Communion does so in good faith or in bad; in either case he ceases to be a member of the Church. The innocence or guilt of the parties involved is purely an internal matter, purely a matter of conscience; it has no direct bearing on the question of one of the external and social bonds requisite for membership." (Van Noort 1959, 244)

[11] Material apostolicity means that a bishop possesses valid orders, but since he has separated himself from the unity of the Church, his mission is illegal. For legality, i.e. to make a bishop a Catholic bishop and successor of Apostles, material apostolicity is *not* enough. What is required for true apostolic succession is that it is both valid (material) and legal (formal). In order that a church be the true Church, the mark also of true, i.e. valid and legal apostolicity is necessary. (Dorsch 1928, 608-609) Therefore the idea that there might be what the Thesis calls "legal material succession" is impossible; it is a same kind of oxymoron like "a squared circle" or "a living corpse."

[12] See Fr. Anthony Cekada, "Bergoglio's Got Nothing to Lose..." (Cekada 244-255)

[13] "1) Bishops who ordained other bishops, as well as the bishops ordained, besides the sanctions mentioned in canons 2370 and 2373, 1 and 3, of the Code of Canon Law, incurred also, *ipso facto*, excommunication most specially reserved to the Apostolic See as stated in the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office of 9 April 1951 (AAS XLIII, 1951, p. 217 f.) The penalty contained in canon 2370 applies also to assisting priests, should any have been present.

2) In accordance with canon 2374 priests **illicitly ordained** in this way are *ipso facto* suspended from the order received, and they are also **irregular** should they exercise the order (canon 985, 7).

3) Finally, as regards those who have already received ordination in this illicit manner, or who will perhaps receive ordination from them, whatever about the validity of the orders, the Church does not nor shall it recognize their ordination, and as regards all juridical effects, it considers them in the state which each one had previously, and the above-mentioned penal sanctions remain in force until repentance." (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 18 April 1983, p. 12)

[14] "Therefore, those who are divided from one another in faith or in government cannot live in the unity of such a body, and in its one divine spirit." (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, DZ 2286; DS 3802) "It was to this Mystical Body, the Church, into which Christ commanded all nations to enter; and He decreed her to be a means of salvation without which no one can enter heaven, and that whoever refuses to submit to this divinely established Church will not be saved." (Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston, 1949, DS 3867-3868)

this true Church to which the traditional Bishops and priests are obliged to guide the true flock of Christ on earth to enter. While it is true that one can err in good faith *where* the true Church is, no one can remain in the state of doubt about it. Bergoglio either is a member of the Church of Christ, or he is not. If he is a Catholic, then he can, according to the divine law and the Canon Law, not just be *elected* Pope, but also *become* Pope. But if he is not a member, then not only his papacy, but also his supposed election to the office is, according to both Canon and divine law, invalid. And Bergoglio's organization (the Novus Ordo church) either has the Holy Ghost as its soul, or it does not. If it has, it is the true Church of Christ; and it is treated as such by Novus Ordo and R&R. But if it doesn't, it is a false sect, and must be completely and totally rejected by Catholics.

Sources:

Antoninus of Florence, St.
1740 Summa Theologica. Pars tertia. Verona: Ex Typographia Seminarii, Apud Augustinum Carattonium.

Bellarmine, St. Robert
2016 Controversies of the Christian Faith. Translated from Latin by Kenneth Baker, S.J. Keep the Faith, Inc.

CCL
2001 The 1917 or Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law in English Translation. Dr. Edward N. Peters, Curator. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.

Cekada, Anthony
2021 Don't Get Me Started! Collected Writings 1979. Vol. III. Whatever (2007-2019). West Chester, OH: St. Gertrude the Great Roman Catholic Church.

Conte a Coronata, Matthæus
1950 Institutiones Iuris Canonici ad usum utriusque cleri et scholarum. Volumen I. Editio quarta aucta et emendata. Marietti Editori Ltd.

Dorsch, Emil
1928 Institutiones theologiæ fundamentalis. Vol. II. De ecclesia Christi. Editio altera retractata et aucta. Innsbruck: Feliciani Rauch.

DS
1963 Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum. Editio XXXII. Adolf Sch nmetzer (ed.). Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder

DZ
2009 The Sources of Catholic Dogma. Translated by Roy J. Deferrari from the Thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's Enchiridion Symbolorum. Boonville, NY: Preserving Christian Publications.

Maroto, Philippo
1919 Institutiones Iuris Canonici ad Normam Novi Codicis. Tomus II. Madrid: Editorial del Corazon de Maria.

O'Connell, J.
1940 The Celebration of Mass. A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal. Volume II: The Rite of the Celebration of Low Mass. Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company.

Roman Catechism
1984 The Roman Catechism. Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions.

Van Noort, G.
1959 Dogmatic Theology. Volume II: Christ's Church. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press.

Wilhelm, Joseph & Scannell, Thomas
1906 A Manual of Catholic Theology Based on Scheeben's "Dogmatik". With a Preface by Cardinal Manning. Vol. I. The Sources of Theological Knowledge, God, Creation and the Supernatural Order. Third Edition, Revised. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner Co., Ltd.

THE CORRECT USE OF CONDITIONAL BAPTISM

Fr. Vili Lehtoranta

"It ain't so much men's ignorance that does the harm as their knowing so many things that ain't so."
- G. K. Chesterton[1]

"Nothing should be innovated, nothing done but what was handed down."
- Pope St. Stephen I

I. State of the Question

The great confusion about matters of faith and morals in the world is often an occasion of anxiety for Traditional Catholics. Usually, the best antidote to these anxieties is to have a regular spiritual life, which consists of devotions, great trust to the love and mercy of God, and reception of the Sacraments, especially those of the Holy Eucharist and Penance.

Unfortunately, because this great confusion has been rampant in the Church, too, ever since the apostasy of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), many of the Sacraments of the sect which sprang from the said council, labelled the "Novus Ordo" (new order) church, have been rendered doubtful or invalid, including that of Holy Orders.

Recently among Traditional Catholics there have arisen doubts about the validity of baptisms performed in the Novus Ordo sect. This especially after some well-documented cases of invalid or doubtful baptisms done by Novus Ordo priests have come into light.

One of the Traditionalist clergymen who has questioned the validity of the Novus Ordo baptisms in general, i.e. in all cases, is Bishop Donald Sanborn, Rector of Most Holy Trinity Seminary in Reading, PA, and Superior General of the Roman Catholic Institute (the RCI). In his January 2023 Newsletter he wrote:

> Our policy now is this: If you arrive from the Novus Ordo, it is necessary that your baptism be verified either by yourself, or by some witness. Otherwise we baptize again conditionally. For who knows how many other instances of invalid or doubtful baptisms there have been? We have seen many videos of Novus Ordo priests pour the water onto the hair, and not the forehead, of the recipient. To do so is to render the sacrament doubtful.[2]

The pastoral directory of the RCI, article 28, says:

> Baptisms conferred by Novus Ordo clergy during or after 1990 must be verified as having been done correctly. If positive proof of the correctness of the rite should be lacking, then the baptism must be conferred again *sub conditione* [conditionally].[3]

At the first outset, this practice (or policy, as it is called) seems perfectly legitimate. Baptism is the Sacrament which puts a soul in the state of sanctifying grace and makes him a member of the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, His Kingdom on earth. If the Novus Ordo church and its priests are careless in administering this Sacrament, why not just follow the safer course, and make sure that a person who joins a Traditionalist parish is validly baptized?

But in this most recent controversy, the question which has remained unanswered is this: what are the sacramental and theological principles, drawn from the Canon Law and liturgical books and Church manuals, which justify this policy of the RCI?

At St. Gertrude the Great Roman Catholic Church, whose pastor is Bishop Charles McGuire, and where I am one of the priests, we have come to this conclusion: there is none.

Instead we follow the practice that if someone from a Novus Ordo parish wants to join one of our parishes or missions, we simply ask him if he is a baptized Catholic. And we also ask if he

[1] Chesterton 1988, 169.
[2] Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter, January 2023, p.3.
[3] http://romancatholicinstitute.org/pastoral-directory-of-the-roman-catholic-institute/

adheres to our positions regarding the Church and the Faith. (Nowadays we also emphasize the traditional teaching about marriage). And if he does adhere to our positions, we tell him to go to confession to a Traditional priest and then he can start receiving the Sacraments.

Therefore, we now give this study where I'll present the reasons why we differ with and reject the policy of Bishop Sanborn regarding conditional baptisms.

II. History of Conditional Baptism

The question about baptisms done outside the Catholic Church arose for the first time in the 3rd century. At that time one of the eminent Church Fathers, Tertullian, started to teach that heretics do not have the same God, nor the same Christ as Catholics have, and therefore Baptism administered by them is invalid. The Church of Africa adopted this view in a council held by Agrippinus, Bishop of Carthage, around 230-235.[4]

One of the early Fathers who favored rebaptism of heretics was St. Cyprian, the successor of Agrippinus as Bishop of Carthage. He wrote: "Men are not washed among them, but rather made foul, nor are sins purged away, but are even accumulated." In a council held at Carthage in 256, sixty-one bishops signed a letter to the Pope explaining their reasons for rebaptizing, and claiming that it was a question upon which Bishops "were free to differ."[5]


St. Cyprian of Carthage

But against this position (policy) of the African Bishops, Pope St. Stephen I said that the practice of rebaptizing heretics was an innovation not approved by the Church. The Church teaching was that those who followed this practice of rebaptism were themselves held as heretics. Therefore Pope St. Stephen sent an epistle to Africa, ordering its clergy to stop rebaptisms. This letter of his included the pastoral direction: "Nothing should be innovated, nothing done but what was handed down."[6] Africa came into line with Rome soon after the martyrdom of St. Cyprian in 258.[7]

Though rebaptism was condemned, another problem arose two centuries afterwards in Italy. During the early part of the 5th century, the Ostrogoths, who were Arian heretics, attacked the Western Roman Empire, kidnapped Catholic boys and forced them fight in their barbarian armies. During the time of Bishop Neon, who in 450-473 was the Bishop of Ravenna, the capitol of the Western Empire, many prisoners were released and returned to Ravenna, where they now wanted to attend Catholic worship.

But these youth presented a problem to Bishop Neon. They had been so young at their capture that they did not know if someone had baptized them or not in their infancy. With these youth, the very *fact* of their Baptism was doubtful, and there were so many of them, that it greatly disturbed the Bishop. But Neon did what every good Catholic would do, namely he consulted the authorities; and the greatest authority at this time was the Pope, then St. Leo I. In his answer to Neon, St. Leo wrote:

> And so wherever the man himself who is anxious for the new birth **does not recollect his baptism**, and **no one can bear witness** about him being unaware of his consecration to God, there is no possibility for sin to creep in, seeing that, so far as their knowledge goes, neither the bestower or receiver of the consecration is guilty. We know indeed that **an unpardonable offense is committed**, whenever in accordance with the institutions of heretics which the holy Fathers have condemned, **any one is for-**

[4] Chapman 1913, 586.
[5] Chapman 1913, 586.
[6] Vincent of Lerins 1847, 14-16.
[7] Chapman 1913, 587.

ced twice to enter the font, which is but once available for those who are to be reborn, in opposition to the Apostle's teaching, which speaks to us of One Godhead in Trinity, one confession in Faith, one sacrament in Baptism. But in this nothing similar is to be apprehended, since, **what is not known to have been done at all, cannot come under the charge of repetition**. And so, whenever such a case occurs, first **sift it by careful investigation, and spend a considerable time**, unless his last end is near, in inquiring whether there be absolutely no one who by his testimony can assist the other's ignorance. And when it is established that **the man who requires the sacrament of baptism is prevented by a mere baseless suspicion, let him come boldly to obtain the grace, of which he is conscious of no trace in himself**. Nor need we fear thus to open the door of salvation which has not been shown to have been entered before...

But **if it is established that a man has been baptized by heretics, on him the mystery of regeneration must in no way be repeated**, but only that conferred which was wanting before, so that he may obtain the power of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the Bishop's hands.[8]



Alexander VI, Pope in 1492-1503

We see that there were, then, two questions to be solved in the case of a doubtful Baptism. The Bishop was first to inquire if the man was baptized *at all*. If this couldn't be established, he was to be baptized *conditionally*, in which case no offense of rebaptizing was committed. But if it *was* possible to establish that the man had received Baptism administered by Arian heretics, he was *not* to be baptized, either conditionally or absolutely. He was, in that case, to be simply given the Sacrament of Confirmation, and treated as a Catholic.

The next time there was a major baptismal controversy was in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1400s. Some Eastern schismatics, who wished to join the Catholic Church, presented themselves to Albert Tabor, Bishop of Vilna. The difficulty with them was that their Eastern schismatic churches had baptized them with the form: "The servant of God N. is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Bishop Tabor therefore consulted Pope Alexander VI, if these people should renounce their former Baptism and be baptized again. The Pope made the decision, that the Baptism should *not* be repeated, and that all those baptized in the third person who wished to join the Church, could do so without any condition, obligation, or force to submit to conditional Baptism.[9]

Though the Pope explicitly declared the Eastern schismatic baptisms to be valid, there nevertheless remained a policy, especially among the diocesan clergy, of performing conditional baptism on converts from schism. This was one of the abuses which the Council of Trent, convoked in 1545, sought to correct. *The Roman Catechism*, authorized by the Council, and published by Pope St. Pius V, instructed that the pastors must be particularly careful to avoid the frequent abuse of indiscriminate administration of conditional Baptism on account that this practice (policy) exposes the Sacrament to serious disrespect. The *Roman Catechism* continued:

Some people imagine that if a child is presented for Baptism, no inquiry as to a possible previous Baptism is required, and that one can proceed immediately to administer the sacrament. Even worse is the case where, having ascertained that the child was baptized privately, one does not hesitate to baptize it conditionally, and actually add at the same time the solemn ceremonies of the Church! **Such action is sacrilegious**, and involves the minister in what canonists call an "irregularity."* It was authorita-

[8] Letter 166. Emphasis added.

[9] Mončak 1987, 218-219. This form is valid only in the Eastern rites, not in the Latin Church. Cf. Prümmer 1953, 84.

* Previously one who thus solemnly rebaptized, and also the person who knowingly submitted to rebaptism, incurred irregularity, which prevented the reception of higher orders. This delict does not appear in the list of irregularities given in the Code of Canon Law (1917), and therefore, according to the general principles of the law, it must be considered as abolished. (McHugh 1917, 108)

tively decided by Pope Alexander that the conditional form of Baptism is to be used only when, **after due inquiry, there is still a doubt** as to the validity of the previous Baptism, and that **in no other case can it ever be lawful to administer Baptism a second time, even conditionally**.[10]

So, in line with the decisions of Pope St. Leo, the Church defined the principle that if the Baptism of the candidate was doubtful, the priest was *not allowed* just to perform a new rite of Baptism at his free will. He was obliged to do diligent research *in each case*, and only if the doubt still remained, was it lawful to perform conditional Baptism. And the reason why the Church so greatly emphasized the necessity of such research was the danger of the priest committing a sacrilege, namely trying to perform again a sacred rite which by divine commandment can be given only once.

The Roman Catechism further defined that Baptism, for the sake of its nature and character, may never, on any account be repeated, and that the pastors should carefully instruct the faithful on this point. But if there were a *reasonable doubt* about the *fact* of the previous Baptism, a conditional Baptism, as a reasonable precaution, should be administered with the following formula: "If you are already baptized, I do not baptize you again; but if you are not already baptized, I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."[11] *The Roman Ritual* of 1614 enshrined that formula within its introduction, "*On Properly Administering the Sacrament of Baptism*." The form to be used was: "N. if thou art not baptized, I baptize thee, etc." Conditional baptism was to be done *solemnly*, i.e. with all the ceremonies described in the Ritual, except in the cases of adult converts from heresy, when it could, with the permission of the Ordinary, be done *privately* without ceremonies.[12]



CATECHISMVS,
Ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini,
AD PAROCHOS,
PII QVINTI PONT. MAX.
IVSSV EDITVS.

S.P.Q.R

P. M.

ROMAE,
In ædibus Populi Romani,
apud Paulum Manutium,
M D LXVI.
CVM PRIVILEGIO PII V. PONT. MAX.

III. The Principles in Administrating Baptism

After Trent, the Roman congregations issued several clarifications concerning the investigation that the priest, who sought to baptize a convert conditionally, was to do. If the *validity* of a Baptism administered by non-Catholics was doubtful, the case had to be investigated to decide if Baptism was to be conferred at all, or conditionally. This meant that the rituals of the respective sect were to be searched and their customs examined. The golden middle to be observed was: "Not too lenient and not too strict."[13]

These principles were laid out in the Code of Canon Law of 1917, canon 732:

> **1) The Sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and orders, which imprint a character, cannot be repeated.**
>
> **2) But if a prudent doubt exists about whether really and validly these [Sacraments] were conferred, they are to be conferred again under condition.**

Several theologians and canonists have written numerous manuals commenting on the Code, including instructions and principles about the proper administration of the Sacraments. And it's this Code and these theologians from which any sacramental principles (policies) must be drawn.

Though Bishop Sanborn often (including in the newsletter quoted above) likes to criticize the Modernist teachers of the Vatican II church for saying that "sacraments are not magic words," that statement is very much true. Sacraments are *not* magic words. For example, when I say the words of absolution over a penitent, these words to do not change a bad person into a good

[10] RC 1985, 190-191. Part 2, chapter 1, #57.

[11] RC 1985, 189-190. Part 2, chapter 1, #55 & #56.

[12] Fortescue & O'Connell 1962, 363.

[13] Augustine 1921, 23-24.

person, as if I were a magician changing a rabbit into colorful scarfs by saying *hocus pocus*. To absolve someone validly, mere words are not enough. The person absolving must have valid orders and true mission from the Church, and the person absolved must have true contrition for his sins and have made an integral confession. So whenever a priest is investigating whether a certain Sacrament is valid or not, he has to examine the case carefully according to the sacramental principles of the Church, not according to his own whims.

In the case of the sacrament of Baptism, in order that it be valid, i.e. to work and confer sanctifying grace and membership in the Church, the person baptizing must have the correct intention, apply the correct matter – i.e. water – and pronounce the correct words. In his bull *Exultate Deo* (1439) Pope Eugene IV defined:

> All these sacraments are dispensed in three ways, namely, by things as the matter, by words as the form, and by the person of the minister conferring the sacrament with the intention of doing as the Church does; if any of these is lacking the sacrament is not fulfilled.[14]

We therefore need to look into these cases separately, first regarding the necessary intention of the minister, and then his application of the correct matter and form.

III.a. Intention

It was through some controversies that theologians in the medieval times began a systematic study of sacramental principles, turning their attention to the question of the minister's mind and intention. Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) wrote:

> Note that for someone to be baptized, it is necessary that the minister intend to baptize and not merely to bathe or to wash the body; but it does not seem necessary, as regards the effect of Baptism, that he should know what Baptism is, or that in it grace is infused, or that it is a sacrament; nor is it needed that he believe this. Indeed, even though he believes the contrary and thinks the whole thing as nonsense and deception, nevertheless Baptism produces its effect. Likewise, it is not necessary that he who baptizes should know what the Church is, or from where the Church or the person baptized is, nor that he mentally intends to do what the Church does. Even if he in his mind should wish to perform the contrary, that is, not to do what the Church does, nevertheless he does it, because if he keeps the form, the person nevertheless is baptized, **as long as the minister intends to baptize**. That's why, if someone in the case of necessity, or even outside of necessity, were to go to a Saracen and say: "Baptize me," and teaches him the form, and the Saracen baptizes him, not believing that through the immersion anything happens except a soaking, and does not intend to baptize him, or even to soak him according to the **intention** of him who asks the Baptism, namely, that Baptism should effect whatever it can effect, and the person baptizing **intends to confer whatever the other ministers who confer Baptism intend**, although he does not believe it can effect anything, then the Baptism is valid. But if he does not intend this, he does not baptize, and it is unnecessary that he knows anything else what the Church understands about these things, or even what he knows or believes to be the Church.[15]

The person baptizing, therefore, even if he'd be a non-Catholic, confers a valid Baptism, as long as he *wills to baptize*, even though he doesn't understand or believe what the Church is, or does not know anything about what the Church does. The reason is that the minister does not need to perform the same thing what the Church *intends* but what the Church *does*.[16] St. Thomas Aquinas summarizes: "If the form is kept, and nothing outwardly done which expresses a contrary intention, the Baptism is valid."[17]

The Church has ever since, both in theory and in practice, emphasized that doubts about the validity of baptisms based upon the minister's intention are imprudent and scrupulous. The *Instruction* of the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition (later the Holy Office) of 30 January, 1833, is of particular interest. A convert to the Catholic faith said that he was worried about his Baptism, because a schismatic Bishop, who also had recently converted to the true faith, had declared, that while he was still in schism, he had never had the intention of truly baptizing when he baptized the children of Catholics. This was because he had hated the Catholic religion. The instruction referred to St. Pius V's declaration

[14] DZ 695.

[15] De Baptismo et ejus effectu. Innocent 1570, 459-460.

[16] Cf. DZ 867.

[17] Thomas Aquinas 1947, 237. Distinctio VI, Q. 1, Art. II.

that Calvinist Baptism was valid, because the private belief of the minister against baptismal regeneration does not annul his general prevailing intention of doing what Christ instituted, or what is done in the true Church of Christ.* A generic intention of doing what the Church does, or of doing what Christ instituted, or what Christians do, is sufficient. And the *Instruction* rejected the doubt about the validity of the Baptism in question as being imprudent and without sufficient foundation.[18]

In 1872 the following question was presented to the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition: “Whether Baptism administered by heretics is doubtful, because of lack of intention of doing what Christ willed, if an express declaration were made by the minister before Baptism, that Baptism produced no effect upon the soul.” The answer was: “In the negative, because, notwithstanding the error about the effect of Baptism, the intention of doing what the Church does is not excluded.”[19]

Jeanne Lombard: Clandestine Baptism by the Huguenots, 1925

The same principle was followed, and reference given to previous decrees, in the answer given in 1877 to Augustin-Magloire Blanchet, Bishop of Nesqually, USA. Bishop Blanchet had enquired about the validity of Baptism conferred by certain groups of Methodists, whose doctrine and practice seemed doubtful. The answer said:

> Now “what the Church does” signifies not the purpose in view but the action done. Moreover, the same is clear from the practice of the Church. For neither did the ancient Church rebaptize children baptized by Pelagians, nor do we rebaptize those baptized by Zwinglians and Calvinists; and yet we know that all these baptize without the intention of fulfilling the purpose of Baptism, which is to take away original sin.[20]

Whatever doubts one might have concerning the validity of Novus Ordo baptisms, they can’t, therefore, be based on defective intention or the mental state of the minister. The sufficient intention is so easy to have that really the only way *not* to have it, would be if the person performing Baptism would especially resolve: “I do not intend what the Church does.”[21]

III.b. Matter and Form

Since there can be no question of an intention invalidating a Baptism, we’ll look to the other two qualifications mentioned by Pope Eugene IV, namely matter and form. *The Baltimore Catechism* tells how one would give Baptism: “I would give Baptism by pouring ordinary water on the forehead of the person to be baptized, saying while pouring it: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.”[22]

As said above, Canon Law states that “if a prudent doubt exists about whether really and validly these [Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders] were conferred, they are to be conferred again under condition.”

The question naturally arises, then, what does

* In France, during the religious wars between Catholics and Calvinist Huguenots in the 1500s, the question arose whether to rebaptize those baptized by the Calvinists who wished to convert to Catholicism. The question was taken to Pope St. Pius V, who answered that they shouldn’t. The council of Embrun, in 1576, therefore decided, that since the Pope had defined that Baptism done by the Calvinists was valid, because they used correct matter and form, and had the general intention of doing what Christ instituted, those who were baptized by the Calvinists are not to be baptized again conditionally. (Mangenot 1910, 340)

[18] Leeming 1956, 472.
[19] Leeming 1956, 472-473.
[20] Leeming 1956, 473.
[21] DZ 1318.
[22] Connell 1958, 187.

it mean to have a "doubt," and when can it be categorized as "prudent," as opposed to "imprudent"?

"Doubt" comes from the Latin word *dubium*. It can be defined by "a state in which the mind is suspended between two contradictory propositions and unable to assent to either of them."[23] Thus for example, I may have a doubt if this person is baptized or not.

Doubt is opposed to *certitude*, i.e. "the adhesion of the mind to a proposition without misgiving as to its truth."[24] For example, I am certain that this person is baptized because I baptized him myself.

Doubt is either *positive* or *negative*. In a *positive* doubt the evidence for and against is so equally balanced as to render decision impossible, e.g. I know that a person went through a baptism ceremony, but I don't know who baptized him. A *negative* doubt arises from the absence of sufficient evidence on either side, e.g. I have no evidence that this person has received Baptism. It is thus possible that a doubt may be positive on the one side and negative on the other, i.e. I am certain that the person went through a ceremony of Baptism, but I don't know if the person who baptized him was qualified to do it.[25]

Prudent doubts are distinguished from *imprudent*, according to the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the considerations on which the doubt is based.[26]

As Canon Law states, there might be doubts whether a person is either "really" or "validly" baptized. In sacramental theology, when the question is about the existence or non-existence of some *fact* connected with obligation, and when the fact at issue is one about which no presumption is afforded, such as if the person was baptized or not, the principle to solve the negative doubt is: "A fact should not be taken for granted, but must be proved."[27]

Unlike in the times of Bishop Neon of Ravenna, we live in a time when there is very rarely any doubt whether a person has gone through the ceremony of Baptism or not. Either a personal testimony, a photograph, or a baptismal certificate from the person's parish is sufficient to verify the fact.

To settle a negative doubt about the *quality*, or validity, of an act performed (such as Baptism), it may be settled from general presumptions or principles. When the act was according to law, and the doubt concerns its validity or sufficiency, one may take it that all was rightly done, for it usually happens that he who complies with the substance, also complies with what is accessory. Moreover, the welfare of the public and of individuals requires that an act done outwardly according to law should be deemed as rightly performed unless the contrary can be proved. Hence the rule: "In doubt decide for the validity of what was done."[28]

This is the basic sacramental principle what we follow at St. Gertrude the Great. When a person from a Novus Ordo parish comes to us, agrees with our positions, and wishes to join us, we simply asked if he is a baptized Catholic. We know from the rituals and testimonies that the Novus Ordo sect uses the correct matter and form. We therefore judge according to "what was done," not what might have been done and not done. To doubt the quality, or validity, of a person's Baptism would be imprudent, because there is no room either for a positive doubt, for we can identify the sect and minister, or for a negative doubt, because we can have the proper physical evidence of the ceremony.

IV. Lay Baptism

Though there is, of course, no Church decision about the quality or validity of the Novus Ordo baptisms, the Church has clear principles about the repetitions of lay baptisms. And the principle is that it is gravely unlawful to rebaptize, even conditionally, when there is mere suspicion or tenuous doubt, that is, *less* than a prudent doubt, regarding the validity of the first Baptism.[29]

It is obvious, then, that the practice of giving conditional Baptism, as a matter of course, to all who have already received the Sacrament from a layman, cannot be justified. The 1927 Maynooth Synod of Ireland, which carried out the work of

[23] Sharpe 1913, 141.
[24] Sharpe 1913, 141.
[25] Sharpe 1913, 141.
[26] Sharpe 1913, 141.
[27] McHugh & Callan 1960, 238.
[28] McHugh & Callan 1960, 239.
[29] McCarthy 1960, 54.

bringing Irish ecclesiastical discipline into harmony with the Code of Canon Law, had this principle in mind, when it decreed that "infants baptized by lay people are not to be rebaptized *sub conditione*, unless there remains, *after diligent investigation*, a prudent doubt concerning the validity of the former Baptism." Diligent investigation is prescribed in every case. This precludes the application of any universal principle of always rebaptizing conditionally. It is unlawful, and *per se* gravely unlawful, to repeat a Sacrament if there is no reasonable or prudent basis for the doubt regarding its validity.[30]

V. How to Solve a Doubt about Validity?

It should be noted that doubt is a purely subjective condition, i.e. it belongs only to the mind which has to judge the facts, and has no application to facts themselves.[31] The person whose baptismal status is meant to be solved either has been regenerated in baptismal waters, or he has not. Whatever doubts I may have about either the *fact* or the *quality* of his Baptism, doesn't change his status in one way or another.

A new-born baby being baptized by a midwife in the mother's bedroom

Therefore, when solving the doubt, the solution cannot be any policy about what a particular minister is *assumed* to do or not to do, but what he *actually has done*, and whether this particular person here and now (*hic et nunc*) has received Baptism or not.

I can give two examples from St. Gertrude's, the cases of *Mr. X* and *Baby Y*. Mr. X, who wanted to convert to Catholicism, had been baptized in a Protestant sect; Baby Y had been baptized by her mother because of a very speedy delivery; and because the baby was having breathing difficulties, the mother baptized her just in case. In neither case was there a doubt about the *fact* of Baptism, but merely about the *quality* of it, namely was it valid, i.e. did it work.

In Mr. X's case, I originally was going to baptize him conditionally, since he came from Protestantism. But when I asked about the qualities of his Baptism, he said his parents had told him that this particular sect, though it baptized by immersion into water, did not use the trinitarian formula, which is essential for the validity. Therefore I baptized him unconditionally, with all the ceremonies prescribed in the *Roman Ritual* for adult converts to the faith. In Mr. X's case, the study about the qualities of his Baptism showed that it had not worked. There was no need for conditional Baptism for I had done the research and not acted by a mere assumption or policy.

In Baby Y's case, she was born to parents who were members of St. Gertrude the Great and married by Bishop Dolan. After hearing about Baby Y's birth, and the extraordinary circumstances of it, he called the mother over the phone to ask about the qualities of the Baptism. Bishop Dolan asked the mother if she had poured the water over the baby's head while saying the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The mother told him she had. She was nervous, though, and asked if it should be done again just to be on the safe side. But Bishop Dolan said it sounded like she had done it correctly, that it was a one-time thing, and all the other baptismal ceremonies would be provided by Father Cekada. So in Baby Y's case, the study about the qualities of her Baptism showed that it had worked.

[30] McCarthy 1960, 54.

[31] Sharpe 1913, 141.

VI. The Church Teaching about Doubting Baptism

In dealing with casuist cases about the doubts concerning Baptism, the moral theologians have repeatedly warned against repeating the Sacrament based on mere doubt or suspicion:

> Before there can be any question involving a repetition of this necessary Sacrament there must be a more reasonable foundation for the doubt than a mere *think so*. Theologians are agreed that a mere *negative doubt* is not sufficient to warrant an iteration of a Sacrament. It is not lawful to repeat a Sacrament even *conditionally* under the circumstances, for such a doubt is held to be *omnino imprudens atque inane** and hence the reconference of a Sacrament would make the minister guilty of a mortal sin. - -
>
> A Baptism is to be considered as probably invalid when there is real reason for doubting whether some essential requisite of the sacrament was wanting, e.g., when doubtful matter or form has been used. If anxiety arises that is not supported by any good reason, as happens with scrupulous persons whose vain fears make them uncertain about their actions and intentions, it should be dismissed from the mind as unworthy of attention. Only doubts that are objective and well founded ought to be considered. To repeat Baptism, Confirmation or Holy Orders, even conditionally, because of doubts that are plainly insufficient, would be a sacrilege for the same reason that an absolute iteration is a profanation of sacred things.[32]

Having an attitude (policy) where the priest automatically presumes, when the correct matter and form were applied, "what if this person was not properly baptized," is purely an unreasonable, imprudent, and negative doubt.

VII. Solemn and Private Baptism

But if one would follow the RCI policy of administering conditional Baptism on adult converts from the Novus Ordo, there is, besides the theological and sacramental problems, also the question of what manner of reception into the Church should be used in their case.

In sacramental theology, when divided according to the form, there are two kinds of Baptisms, **solemn** and **private**. Which one to be used is determined by the circumstances of the situation and the qualities of the recipient.

Solemn Baptism is the one which is administered by a priest or Bishop following all the described ceremonies in the *Roman Ritual*. The *Ritual* has a much longer form for the solemn Baptism of adults. But the Ordinary can, for a reasonable cause, allow the form for infants to be used in the Baptism of adults.[33]

Since Novus Ordo baptisms are held by the RCI as being merely "doubtful," and Solemn Baptism is administered only unconditionally, a priest couldn't use it in the case of administering Baptism conditionally on adults.

In *private Baptism*, usually given in a danger of death, it is sufficient that the minister, a priest or a layman, administer the essential matter and form, and have the intention of doing what the Church does. All the ceremonies that precede the actual Baptism are omitted. Private Baptism may be given only in the case of real necessity, i.e., if the child (or adult) is in danger of dying before the full rite is completed. The reason is, of course, that if it were possible to go through the whole rite, the case would not be one of necessity at all, and so there would be no excuse for private Baptism.[34]

There is only one exception, when the *Roman Ritual* concedes the right to use private Baptism outside the danger of death, and that is "in the case of adult *heretics* who are to be baptized conditionally."[35] Therefore we look next at how the Church has dealt with doubtful baptisms in different sects.

VIII. The Reception of Converts

As the Church legislates, each single case must be investigated and indiscriminate rebaptizing of non-Catholics is not founded on any law. As an example of sects whose Baptism is assumed to be valid, the Church has mentioned Calvinists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans.[36]

But whenever there was a question of a convert from some obscure Protestant sect, since there was not one authorized mode of baptizing

* utterly imprudent and void.

[32] McHugh 1917, 100, 108.

[33] Fortescue & O'Connell 1962, 361-362.

[34] Fortescue & O'Connell 1962, 362.

[35] Weller 1950, 27. Emphasis added.

[36] Augustine 1921, 23-24.

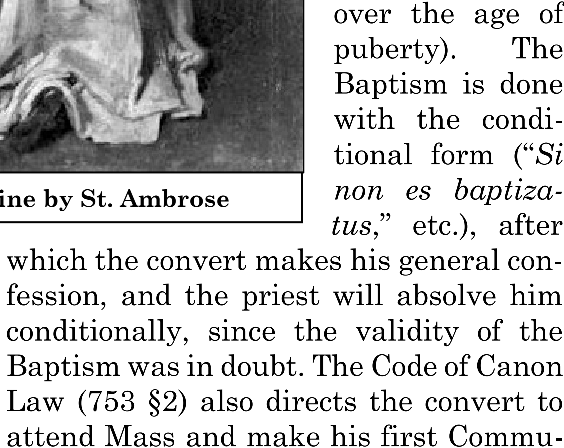
among the sects, and the necessity and true significance of the Sacrament was not uniformly taught and put into practice among them, there evidently were many instances where the validity of their Baptism remained questionable. This was especially true in the United States, where Bishops adopted the practice that practically all converts from Protestantism were invariably baptized, either absolutely or conditionally. This was not because Baptism administered by heretics was held to be invalid, but because it was generally impossible to discover whether they had been properly baptized. Even in cases where a ceremony had certainly been performed, i.e. the *fact* of the event was certain, a reasonable doubt of validity generally remained.[37]

Though some countries were given more leeway in applying the Church principles, the Code of Canon Law, the *Roman Ritual*, and the decisions of the Holy Office state that the reception of a convert is always referred to the diocesan Bishop, i.e. a Bishop with an ordinary jurisdiction. It was in his power only to decide what procedure to use, whether there was a need of an abjuration of errors, and also if there was a necessity to absolve the convert from the censure of excommunication, if perchance he had incurred it. When the priest assigned to receive the convert had made a careful inquiry about the *fact* and the *validity* of the convert's Baptism, there were three procedures which could be taken.



Lucini Antonio: Baptism of St. Augustine by St. Ambrose

1) **Convert not already baptized.** In this case there was no need for an abjuration, since an unbaptized person is not a heretic, nor an absolution from an excommunication, nor confession. There is no formal profession of faith needed, because that included in the baptismal rite suffices. Then the convert was baptized according to all the ceremonies of the Ritual.
2) **Convert already baptized.** When it was morally certain that the Baptism formerly received was valid, the same rite of reception was followed as in the case when conditional baptism was conferred, except that the rite of Baptism is omitted and absolution is given unconditionally.
3) **Convert doubtfully baptized.** This rite requires the abjuration of errors (in the case of those over the age of puberty) made in the presence of the Ordinary or his delegate, and at least two witnesses. Then follows the absolution from the censure of excommunication (for those over the age of puberty). The Baptism is done with the conditional form ("*Si non es baptizatus*," etc.), after which the convert makes his general confession, and the priest will absolve him conditionally, since the validity of the Baptism was in doubt. The Code of Canon Law (753 §2) also directs the convert to attend Mass and make his first Communion.[38]



Private Baptism can, as stated above, be made in the case of *adult heretics*, but it still has to be adjoined with the abjuration of errors and general confession.

If a mere negative "what if" doubt, which as we recall, was called "utterly imprudent and

[37] Fanning 1913, 264.

[38] Fortescue 1943, 388-391.

void," would be sufficient to determine the priest's sacramental policy, one could, in that case, start to doubt *all* Baptisms done outside one's own group. This actually took place a few decades ago in Europe. A Traditional group, after losing their priest, called in a Traditional Bishop to take over their mission. And the Bishop* demanded, that *everyone* in the group, children and adults alike, must receive conditional Baptism and Confirmation from him before he agreed to become their pastor.

This is, of course, an extreme example, but a logical conclusion if one starts to follow one's "baseless suspicions" and scruples instead the Canon Law of the Church. It would also be a practice, condemned by St. Leo I, where someone "is forced twice to enter the font."

Incidentally, the *Ritual* gives the reason for the demand of doing research about whether the convert was ever baptized, "so as to preclude that someone who has been baptized before should want to be baptized again – be it out of ignorance, error, selfish advantage, or any other reason, by imposture or perfidy."[39]

Though not poured on the forehead, the amount of water is almost always sufficient for a moral certainty of having touched the skin.

IX. Is there Any Room for Conditional Baptism of Catholics?

This tendency of some faithful, mentioned by the *Ritual*, where a scrupulous or ignorant conscience wants rebaptism, is in no way a novelty. Even St. Cyprian was asked by a certain Magnus if Baptism was valid for those who had been baptized in sickness by mere sprinkling, not washing. St. Cyprian answered that "the divine benefits can in no respect be mutilated and weakened; nor can anything less occur in that case, where, with full and entire faith both of the giver and receiver, is accepted what is drawn from the divine gifts." Sprinkling with water prevailed equally with washing, and Baptism thus received was perfectly valid.[40]

But of course, just as we cannot act upon the principle that there is *always* a prudent doubt in regard to every Baptism done by someone other than a priest, neither can we assume that there can *never* be a prudent doubt. There might well be such a doubt when the Sacrament is given by one who is poorly instructed or mentally under average, or in certain circumstances of difficult childbirth or in other hard conditions, e.g. in darkness, in very great haste, etc. But that's why diligent investigation into the circumstances of each case that arises must be done. This investigation will often help the inquirer to form a morally certain judgment in favor of – or even against – the validity of the lay Baptism, and then there should be no hesitation in acting in accordance with this judgment. But sometimes, as a result of this diligent investigation, it will be really doubtful if the lay Baptism was valid, in which case, if the doubt cannot be solved, the Sacrament should be repeated conditionally.[41]

A typical example of questioning the validity of a Baptism is one mentioned by Bishop Sanborn: one sees a photograph or a video of an adult Baptism, where the water is poured on the person's hair instead of forehead. Father Nicholas Halligan, professor of Fundamental Theology,

---

* He was no one associated with St. Gertrude the Great or Most Holy Trinity Seminary.

[39] Weller 1950, 61.

[40] Epistle 75.

[41] McCarthy 1960, 54-55.

and author of the classic American sacramental manual *The Administration of the Sacraments*, writes: "Unless the skin is washed the baptism is invalid or at least doubtful and thus must be conferred again conditionally. Baptism is at least doubtful if the water touches only the hair."[42]

Here, just like in the cases dealt with above, one must, if a Baptism like this ever came up, solve the doubt, not according to "what ifs," i.e. *maybe* the water didn't touch the skin, but what was actually done. And the essential thing in the application of the matter (water) is that the ablution is verified and signified. This may be done with a greater or lesser quantity of water. One drop could hardly be said to express ablution,[43] but usually the amount used is sufficient to have moral certainty that the water did touch the skin and Baptism was valid.

These kinds of cases are not that common anyway, since the vast majority of Baptisms in the Novus Ordo or mainstream Protestant sects are performed on babies, or, in the case of Baptist sects, usually done by immersion, i.e. performed by completely submerging a person in water.

"Behold I stand nigh the spring of water, and the daughters of the inhabitants of this city will come out to draw water." (Genesis 24:13)

Though a priest can never confer Sacraments conditionally based on an imprudent doubt, it is sometimes allowed to do so based on such a doubt from the part of the faithful. *The Casuist* presents such a case, incidentally about a mother who hurriedly baptized her daughter who appeared to be at the point of death. They often spoke about the Baptism and gradually became convinced it was administered invalidly. Their pastor admonished them to put the matter from their thoughts, for he was convinced the Baptism was valid. But they continued their repeated requests to repeat the Baptism, and as the pastor saw that the matter was seriously vexing their minds, he finally consented to baptize the daughter conditionally.[44]

This kind of a case, like the doubt about whether the water actually touched the hair or not, is a doubt which, while real, is still very slight. Such a doubt does not impose itself on the judgment of a prudent man, and does not therefore constitute a prudent doubt. Still he might not able to reject it, especially in a matter of such great importance as the validity of Baptism. Therefore some grave authorities hold that a troublesome scruple of which a conscience cannot rid itself, provided it be not altogether unreasonable, is a sufficient reason for repeating conditionally a necessary Sacrament such as Baptism.[45]

The amount of guilt the priest incurs on himself depends on his motive. In the case cited, if the pastor acted merely to gratify a whim indulged by mother and daughter, and felt no doubt about the first Baptism, his act of baptizing was not justified. The desire to plea-se or even to relieve distress would not justify him in carrying out a farcical simulation of the Sacrament or in attempting to baptize one who, to his knowledge, was already baptized. But if he, on second thought, decided that the reasons of the mother and daughter, although slight, were not clearly absurd, he could, with a clear conscience, repeat the Baptism, though, of course, he is not obliged to do so. So whether the priest is guilty of sacrilege depends on the motives with which he acted.[46]

A curious case was decided by the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition in 1681. A group

[42] Halligan 1964, 33-34.

[43] Augustine 1921, 34-35.

[44] McHugh 1917, 107.

[45] McHugh 1917, 108.

[46] McHugh 1917, 108-109.

of Scottish Protestants approached a priest with the request either to be rebaptized or at least to have the ceremonies repeated, because they were harassed by demons and felt relieved by conditional Baptism or the use of the customary baptismal ceremonies. The Inquisition granted the request and allowed the practice further, especially for non-Catholics, provided that conditional Baptism was not administered for futile reasons.[47]

So, though it does seem that giving conditional Baptism may sometimes be justified, the Church has tolerated this merely to ease the mind of the faithful, who otherwise might be tormented by their scruples about the validity of their Baptism. A priest, on the other hand, cannot base his sacramental actions on mere imprudent doubts, out of fear of committing a sacrilege.

X. Summary

From everything said above, we can summarize some main points:

- In the Church's practice conditional Baptism was always mainly reserved in the cases where the *fact* of the candidate's Baptism was in doubt. Baptism received in a heretical or schismatical sect always enjoyed the assumption of validity.
- The Church reproved, and, in the past, even shunned priests, who were in the habit of conferring conditional baptisms freely and without examination. She always demanded that the priests do a thorough investigation before baptizing conditionally, out of fear of committing the sacrilege of rebaptizing.
- The investigation which the priest was obliged to do involved doing actual research about the rituals, procedures, and history of the sect where the candidate belonged. The principle to be acted upon was to search *what was actually done*, not what the priest assumed *might* have been or not have been done.
- The RCI sacramental policy of giving conditional Baptism to the Novus Ordo converts is based on a mere negative doubt, i.e. on the doubt that the person wishing to receive the Sacraments from them *might* not be validly baptized. (As Bishop Sanborn put it: "Who knows how many other instances of invalid or doubtful baptisms there have been?") That's why it cannot be held to be a prudent doubt required by Canon Law.
- The RCI policy is, furthermore, not based on any Church Law. On the contrary, both divine law and Church law, as the Council of Trent teaches us, forbid a priest to rebaptize a person who was baptized after midnight of January 1, 1990, and who cannot present proofs of the qualities of his Baptism.
- To demand some proofs from a person in a case where there is no prudent doubt, would be to act merely on "baseless suspicion," in the words of Pope St. Leo I.
- Any policy regarding the Sacraments must be based on sacramental theology, not on anecdotal evidence from YouTube videos.
- At St. Gertrude the Great, we follow the basic principles expressed by Fathers McHugh and Callan, namely that in the cases of converts we find out first the *fact* of their Baptism, which, as these theologians say "must be proved." And when the fact has been proved, and because we know that the Baptism's "act was according to law," since correct matter and form are used by the Novus Ordo, we "take it that all was rightly done."
- The only justification for why the Catholic Church *sometimes* allowed conditional Baptism of Catholics, or even non-Catholics, was to ease their scruples about the validity of their own Baptism.
- This kind of rebaptism is never an obligation for any priest. He must baptize conditionally only if he has a prudent doubt. And this for the reason of the ratio of sacrilege, of which the priest could be guilty, if he gives conditional Baptism based on anything other than a prudent doubt demanded by Canon Law.

XI. Conclusions

Based on the above, we priests who work at St.

[47] Augustine 1921, 73.

Gertrude the Great Roman Catholic Church do not follow the policy of giving conditional Baptism on members of the Novus Ordo sect, which Bishop Sanborn has mandated on the members of the Roman Catholic Institute. The reason is that this policy is not based on any prudent doubt, demanded by Canon Law, but on mere "think sos" and "what ifs." These kinds of doubts are not prudent, in other words, "utterly imprudent and void."

Some faithful might ask, why make yet another big fuss about a theological controversy? The priests of SGG and the RCI already have had a public disagreement about the Thesis of Cassiciacum, which has been very divisive in the already very divided Traditional Catholic movement. Wouldn't it be more prudent for the priests involved just agree to disagree, and, in the words of the third century African bishops, treat this as an issue where the clergy are "free to differ?" Or, in the words of Rodney King: "Can't we all just get along?"

Unfortunately, this policy of the RCI does not just stay in isolation among the chapels and missions of their own priests and bishops. It affects traditional Catholics from other chapels and groups, too, including St. Gertrude the Great and her missions. We have already had several cases of our own parishioners moving to an RCI chapel or approaching them for Sacraments after having spent years attending Mass and receiving Sacraments from us. Diligent research about the validity of their Baptism, required by Church law, has already been made, only for them to find themselves having to submit to being conditionally baptized and conditionally confirmed in order to receive the sacraments from an RCI affiliated priest. This includes people confirmed by Bishop Dolan having been conditionally baptized and confirmed.

Thus this policy of Bishop Sanborn, which follows a mere imprudent doubt, is by extension forced upon clergy outside the RCI apostolate, and also on lay people, who have never questioned their own Baptism and worthy reception of the Sacraments.

This is why we, the priests of St. Gertrude the Great, were compelled to publish a public response. The RCI policy on conditional baptisms contradicts divine law, Canon Law, and the sacramental theology what we were all taught while we were seminarians, and the practice we have used for years as priests. We, as traditional Catholic priests, are all meant to have respect for the decisions of other competent clergy. If a parishioner who was baptized Protestant were determined to have been validly baptized by Bishop Sanborn, I am not meant to re-investigate. I would permit him to the Sacraments. The same respect must be shown in the reverse. I and the other priests who serve St. Gertrude the Great and her missions follow sacramental theology, based on the principles of Canon Law, which we were taught and instructed by Father Cekada to follow.

On the other hand, a sacramental policy such as that of the RCI, which insists on rebaptism of anyone coming from the Novus Ordo and born after the arbitrary year of 1990, is harmful to souls. It is harmful, not only because it goes against the principles of sacramental theology, but it additionally undermines the decisions of other priests and thus causes people to unnecessarily question the priests' capability. Because of this, the policy of the RCI places a burden on us, the traditional priests outside the RCI group. I and the other priests of St. Gertrude the Great were, therefore, not left a choice where we were "free to differ." Since Bishop Sanborn has in his Seminary Newsletter and Pastoral Directory publicly declared his policy, I have been obliged publicly to show why, according to the principles of sacramental theology, this policy, in the words of Daniel, has been "weighed in the balance and found wanting." (Dan. 5:27)

Fr. Vili Lehtoranta

West Chester, Ohio
August 9, 2023
St. John Vianney, C.

Sources:

Augustine, Charles

1921 A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law. Volume IV. On the Sacraments (Except Matrimony) and Sacramentals. Second, Revised Edition. St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co.

Chapman, John
1913 Cyprian of Carthage. – The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church. Volume IV. New York, NY: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc.

CCC
2001 The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law in English Translation with Extensive Scholarly Apparatus. Edited by Edward N. Peters. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.

Chesterton, G. K.
1988 The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton. Volume XXIX: The Illustrated London News 1911-1913. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.

Connell, Francis J. (ed.)
1958 The New Confraternity Edition of the Revised Baltimore Catechism No. 3. New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, Inc.

DZ
2009 The Sources of Catholic Dogma. Translated by Roy J. Deferrari from the Thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's Enchiridion Symbolorum. Boonville, NY: Preserving Christian Publications.

Fanning, William H.W.
1913 Baptism. – The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church. Volume II. New York, NY: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc.

Fortescue, Adrian
1943 The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described. Seventh Edition Further Revised Throughout and Augmented by J. O'Connell. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd.

Fortescue, Adrian & O'Connell, J. B.
1962 The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described. London: Burns & Oates Ltd.

Halligan, Nicholas
1964 The Administration of the Sacraments. Staten Island, NY: Alba House.

Innocent IV
1570 Commentaria Innocentii Quarti Pont. Maximi super libros quinque decretalium. Frankfurt am Main: Per M. Lechler impensis, Hieronymi Feyerabend.

Leeming, Bernard
1956 Principles of Sacramental Theology. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press.

Mangenot, Eugène
1910 Valeur du baptême des Anglicans et des protestants aux yeux de l'Église catholique. – Dictionnaire de théologie catholique. Tome deuxième. Première partie. Paris: Letouzey et Ané.

McCarthy, John
1960 Problems in Theology. Volume I. The Sacraments. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press.

McHugh, John A. (ed.)
1917 The Casuist. A Collection of Cases in Moral and Pastoral Theology. Volume V. New York, NY: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc.

McHugh, John A. & Callan, Charles J.
1960 Moral Theology. A Complete Course Based on St. Thomas Aquinas and the Best Modern Authorities. Revised and Enlarged by Edward P. Farrell, O.P. Volume I. New York, NY: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc.

Mončak, Ihor
1987 Florentine Ecumenism in the Kyivan Church. The Theology of Ecumenism Applied to the Individual Church of Kyiv. Rome.

Prümmer, Dominic
1953 Manuale theologiæ moralis secundum principia S. Thomæ Aquinatis. Tomus III. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

RC
1985 The Roman Catechism. Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions.

Thomas Aquinas
1947 Scriptum Super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi. Recognovit atque iterum edidit H. P. Maria Fabianus Moos, O.P. Tome IV. Paris: P. Lethielleux.

Vincent of Lerins
1847 The Commonitory of Vincent of Lerins. Baltimore, MD: Joseph Robinson.

Weller, Philip T. (ed.)
1950 The Roman Ritual in Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation. Volume I. The Sacraments and Processions. Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company.

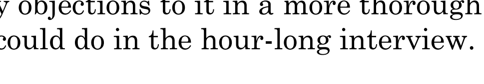
TOTALISM VS. THE CASSICIACUM THESIS

by
Fr. Vili Lehtoranta

Preamble

At the end of October 2022, I was invited to be interviewed at the program named *The Catholic Family Podcast*, hosted by Mr. Kevin Davis. Mr. Davis had previously in March invited Bishop Donald Sanborn to speak about the *Cassiciacum Thesis*, aka. the Thesis of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers. Bishop Sanborn, who is the Rector of the Most Holy Trinity Seminary in Reading, Pennsylvania, is one of the most well-known proponent of the Thesis, together with Father Francesco Ricossa, the head of the *Institute of the Mother of Good Counsel* (IMBC) in Turin, Italy.

Since I myself had, ever since my ordination in 2011, worked closely with Bishop Daniel Dolan and Fr. Anthony Cekada, both of whom rejected the Thesis, and had also learned from them about some of the problems concerning it, I accepted the invitation of Mr. Davis to give a response to Bishop Sanborn's interview. These objections, and the view which Fr. Cekada held, is generally called *Totalism*, meaning the total vacancy of the Holy See, and total rejection of the false church of Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Mr. Davis and I had originally planned to do the interview in May, but because of Bishop Dolan's untimely death in April, and the move of Most Holy Trinity Seminary from Florida to Pennsylvania, my interview was postponed to October. In this article I will give a comparison between the Thesis and Totalism, and present my objections to it in a more thorough form than I could do in the hour-long interview.



I. Is Thesis Sedevacantism?

Sedevacantism comes from the Latin words *sede vacante*, the see being vacant. The reason why the Church can be without a Pope for a long time, even for decades, is that the Pope is what is called the *visible* head of the Church,[1] while Christ is called the *invisible* Head.[2] So the Church is never a headless or imperfect Body, but always has Christ as her Head, even if she is occasionally devoid of her visible head, the Pope.

When is the Church, then, in the state of *sede vacante*? According to Fr. Umberto Benigni, professor of Church history and founder of the *Sodalitium Pianum*, papal *sede vacante* is a time "between the death of the pope and the election of his successor."[3] This is the position of the Totalists, who maintain that the Holy See has been vacant since the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, because Angelo Roncalli was a modernist, was outside of the Catholic Church, and was thus in no way capable to receive the papacy, and also those who were elected to succeed him did not meet the necessary conditions for being a true or legitimate Pope.[4]

Fr. Umberto Benigni (1862-1934), founder of the *Sodalitium Pianum*

The Thesis argument, on the other hand, is that the election of 2013, which chose Jorge Mario Bergoglio, aka. "Pope Francis", was a true papal election, just like the election of 1903, which elected St. Pius X, was a true papal election. According to Father Damien Dutertre, one of the proponents of the Thesis, Bergoglio and his predecessors (and successors) "can validly elect and be elected in the Church" and that they are non-popes only because "they did not properly accept their election to the papacy."[5] From this it follows, that our situation, in these times of Bergoglio, "is therefore not one of pure vacancy of the Roman

[1] DZ 1823.
[2] BC 144.
[3] Benigni 1913, 217.
[4] Cfr. Declaration of Abp. Thuc et al. May 26, 1983.
[5] Dutertre 2022a, 2.

See."[6] Fr. Ricossa says it even more clearly: "The See is occupied by him, and cannot be occupied by someone else for as long as the election has not been declared null by the Church."[7]

Because of this, we Totalists do not see the supporters of the Thesis as real and true Sedevacantists. If there is a legitimate claimant who sits on the throne of St. Peter, and his election was valid, then we are not in the state of *sede vacante* as it was defined by Fr. Benigni.

II. Where is the Hierarchy Today?

The big thing which the Thesis supporters say makes it superior against Totalism is that the Thesis saves the continuation of apostolic hierarchy. They say that in the Totalist system this is gone.

First let us look at what apostolicity means. The definition is given by Fr. Jean-Vincent Bainvel (1858-1937), the dean of the faculty of theology of the Catholic Institute of Paris from 1913 to 1925:

> It is, in fact, an obvious thing: the Church being a hierarchical social body, one must belong to this social body in order to share in the authority of its hierarchy. Without apostolic succession, the hierarchy is no longer that which Christ instituted: it is a human work; and even if the sacraments remained there, the authority would not be there; for the power of order does not of itself carry the power of jurisdiction: the latter is attached to the mission, to the legitimate succession. It is not enough to claim Christ, nor even to have the sacraments. We are his people, we are of his church (I speak externally) when we obey the pastors established by him, sent by him. It is therefore for a Church a capital question that of legitimate succession.[8]

So from the very start, Bergoglio is disqualified as having anything to do with the continuation of hierarchy, because he is a heretic and an apostate, which, as we will see later, automatically excludes him from the Church membership. In other words, he doesn't even have the bare minimum what it takes to be a legitimate possessor of continuation of hierarchy in the Church of Christ. The altar boys who serve my daily school Mass are more successors of Apostles than Bergoglio, for at least the altar boys are Catholics, while Bergoglio is not. As the Bishop, who is ordaining a Subdeacon, says in his instruction to the ordinand: "All that is not of faith is sin, and schism, and outside the unity of the Church."[9]

As we also see from the definition, anyone who claims to be a Catholic Bishop, must possess two things: 1) valid orders, and 2) the legality, or power of jurisdiction.

Fr. Cekada has amply presented his arguments that Bergoglio and his church do not possess valid orders.[10] Therefore, Bergoglio and his bishops are disqualified of having anything to do with the apostolicity of the Catholic Church already on two counts: 1) they are not Catholics, and 2) they do not possess valid orders.

Do Sedevacantist Bishops, who have the Catholic faith and valid orders, have jurisdiction, then? According to the Thesis, no. Fr. Nicolas Despósito, one of the professors of Most Holy Trinity Seminary, has written:

> Sedevacantist bishops do not enjoy any title of jurisdiction. The *supplied sacramental jurisdiction in the internal forum* exercised *per modum actus* in Confession, must not be confused with the ordinary jurisdiction to govern the Church, which belongs to the external forum, is habitual and can only be granted by a Pope. Since sedevacantist bishops are not part of the material-legal hierarchy of the Church which is the basis for juridical status, and have no title (either *true*, *colored* or *presumed*) to jurisdiction to *any* territory, **they do not have the right to represent the whole Church in a General Council.** The only power that sedevacantist bishops have is the power of orders, which allows them to validly ordain priests and administer confirmation.[11]

The Totalist position, on the other hand is, that without legality, any Bishop, Sedevacantist or otherwise, cannot be a true successor of Apostles. He would, in that case, not be a true Bishop, but a thief, as Our Lord says: "He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up another way, he is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth by the door, is the Pastor of the sheep."[12]

But as the 1917 Code of Canon Law (CCL) defines, besides *ordinary* jurisdiction, which is had by the Pope and the diocesan Bishops, there

[6] Dutertre 2022a, 8.
[7] Ricossa 2016, 18.
[8] Bainvel 1909, 1625
[9] *Omne quod non est ex fide, peccatum est, schismaticum est, et extra unitatem Ecclesiæ est*. Biskupek 1935, 50.
[10] "Absolutely Null and Utterly Void" (2006). Cekada 2021b, 278-325. "Still Null and Still Void" (2007) Cekada 2021b, 356-381.
[11] Despósito 2019, 8. Emphasis in the original
[12] John 10:1-2.

is what is called *delegated* jurisdiction (which is not the same as supplied jurisdiction):

> Ordinary power of jurisdiction is that which is attached to an office by law; delegated [power is that which] is committed to a person.[13]

In the times when the Church has Popes, their legitimacy was proved with the *mandatum*, which was a papal document granting permission for the consecration of a Bishop who will serve as Bishop in any capacity, such auxiliary or titular Bishop. To the diocesan Bishops was granted the canonical appointment, which designated the Bishop as an ordinary or residential Bishop.[14] Since the mission of the Church to save souls is *divine* law, and the *method* how this mission is delegated throughout the times and places is merely a *human* law, the Traditional Catholic Bishops are not bound to "seek permission" from any modernist institution, or from any "material-legal hierarchy". Instead, since Christ still remains the invisible Head of His Church, He, in the times when visible head is not had, grants legitimacy and obligation to each Bishop to both validly and legally "to judge, to interpret, to consecrate, to ordain, to offer sacrifice, to baptize and to confirm" as it is said in the rite of Episcopal Consecration. As Fr. Cekada put it: "This divine law always endures, together with the jurisdiction from Christ necessary to fulfill it."[15]



Is this the legal hierarchy of Christ's Church today?

I personally don't know why any Traditional Catholic would have any problem with this. There is no Pope. There are no Bishops with ordinary jurisdiction. Is one to presume that a human ecclesiastical law trumps the divine mission of Christ to do what Traditional priests and Bishops have now done for decades, namely establish churches and missions, where they give Sacraments and teaching to the faithful? So the answer to the question, "where is the hierarchy," is, that it is in the Traditional Catholic Bishops, who have been validly and legally consecrated.

But even if someone *would* have a problem with this, that would not somehow make Thesis true by default. Because according to this Thesis, the hierarchy of Bergoglio, as Fr. Despósito puts it, "enjoys a legal status which can only be removed by a legal process."[16] But this leads to the conundrum which is far worse than any possible problem which might be had with the position of the Traditional Bishops being the true hierarchy. If only the hierarchy of Bergoglio is legal, then the only logical conclusion is that the Sedevacantist priests and Bishops are *illegal*. There is no way the Thesis can get around this. If Bergoglio has power to designate where the legal succession continues, he has also to have the power to designate where it *does not* continue. And his church has done so by declaring as illegal those Traditionalist clerics who derive their orders from Archbishop Pierre Martin Ngo Dinh Thuc:

> Finally, as regards those who have already received ordination in this illicit manner, or who will perhaps receive ordination from them, whatever about the validity of the orders, the Church does not nor shall it recognize their ordination, and as regards all juridical effects, it considers them in the state which each one had previously, and the above-mentioned penal sanctions remain in force until repentance.[17]

Of course no Thesis supporter would say that their orders or mission are illegal. But that is the only logical conclusion if one accepts the "material-legal hierarchy" theory. If this system can't be applied logically, it shouldn't be applied at all.

[13] CCL 197 §1.
[14] Cekada 2021b, 63-64.
[15] "Traditional Priests, Legitimate Sacraments" (2003). Cekada 2021b, 129-139.
[16] Despósito 2019, 6.
[17] *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 18 April 1983, p. 12.

III. Where is the Catholic Church?

As we could already see from above, the Thesis supporters see the hierarchy of Bergoglio as legal. And they also argue, that Bergoglio's church "is not a separate Church, but rather describes the phenomenon of modernist prelates attempting to impose on the Catholic Church their poisonous religion."[18]

Fr. Despósito puts it like this:

> The term "official Church" should be understood here to mean the material hierarchy of the Catholic Church, which remains the same before and after Vatican II. It would be theologically erroneous – even heretical – to designate the present day hierarchy as the Catholic Church formally. Technically, Vatican II was the beginning of a new religion, but not of a new Church.[19]

Is it or is it not?

Here we see how the Thesis attempts to build its own alternative reality. Little bit like in nominalism, an idea "describes" some concept which doesn't necessarily coincide with reality at all. Things are not how they look like. It also resembles Kantianism, where the "phenomenon" as our mind's idea is really extinct from the thing itself, which our mind cannot grasp.[20]

So in this made-up Thesis world, it might *appear* that this church organization of Jorge Mario Bergoglio is not the Catholic Church, but, against all sense-information, the true Church of Christ is still intact in it.[21]

This is a concept which the Totalists reject completely. We say that the election of John XXIII in 1958 was the beginning of both new religion and a new church. Completely independently of anyone's thoughts, the church organization of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, which is clearly a visible entity, either **is** the Mystical Body of Christ, i.e. the Catholic Church, or it **is not**. There is no third option. That's why the opponents of the Thesis are called *Totalists*, because we totally reject the idea that this heretical sect of Bergoglio has anything to do with the true Church of Christ, either legally or in reality. Patrick Henry Omlor labelled this sect as the "Robber Church" and wrote:

> For just how much "change" could the Catholic Church possibly undergo and still be the Church? Quite apparent for all to see are the frenzied efforts of the new robbers to destroy all ties and links with the past, to eradicate from memory all vestiges of the ancient, true, traditional Church. To think of the new Robber Church as the very same Catholic Church that it is so deliberately and painstakingly trying to wipe out of memory? Absurdity of absurdities![22]

And Mr. Omlor wrote these words in 1971! To see Vatican II Church as the same thing as the Catholic Church? Absurdity of absurdities. Unless one shares the mindset of one of our former presidents, who had difficulties to grasp the meaning of the verb "is", everyone must admit that the church organization of Jorge Mario Bergoglio either is the true Church or it is not. After his supposed excommunication from the Church in 1983, Bishop Moisés Carmona (1912-1991), one of the Bishops consecrated by Archbishop Thuc, wrote to the Archbishop of Chihuahua Adalbert Almeida in reply:

> From what Church, Msgr. Almeida – from that of always – or from the new one? You apostates, eminent represen-

[18] Dutertre 2022b, 38.
[19] Despósito 2019, 5.
[20] Parente 1952, 160, 200.
[21] The Dominicans, in the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas, fiercely attacked against nominalism, whose one main proponent was Durandus of Saint-Pourçain. Durandus (d. 1334), whose name means "hardened" or "enduring", was the theological advisor of Pope John XXII at Avignon, and later Bishop of the diocese of Meaux in 1326-1334. He was constantly in trouble with his order because of his opposition to the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas on several theological and philosophical questions. There is a persistent rumor that the Dominicans wrote as an epitaph on Durandus' grave at Meaux these verses:

Durus Durandus jacet hic sub marmore duro.
An sit salvandus, ego nescio nec quoque curo.

Which can be translated:

"Stubborn Durandus here lies under the hard marble.
Whether he is saved, I do not know, neither do I care."

Since the burial place of Durandus has not been preserved, we can neither confirm or deny this rumor. Iribarren 2005, 9.
[22] Omlor 1998, 164.

> tatives of the Vatican II Church, do you have power to excommunicate those who remain in the **Church of always?**... It is a glory for us to be excommunicated for our loyalty to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; we desire that more excommunication come and to have the good fortune to die excommunicated by that Church, which is not the **Church of Christ** assisted by the Holy Ghost.[23]

And truly, the position of Bishop Carmona, the Totalist and Sedevacantist position, is the only one which is completely in accord with Scripture and Tradition. St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

> Let women be subject to their husbands, as to Our Lord: because the man is the head of the woman, as Christ is the Head of the Church, Himself, the Saviour of His Body. But as the Church is subject to Christ, so also the women to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself for it: that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word: that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it may be holy and unspotted.[24]

Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build the organization of Bergoglio?

Pope Boniface VIII opened his famous bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) with these words:

> With Faith urging us we are forced to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic Church and that, apostolic, and we firmly believe and simply confess this (Church) outside which there is no salvation nor remission of sin, the Spouse in the Canticle proclaiming: "One is my dove, my perfect one. One she is of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her" [Cant. 6:8].[25]

We Totalists declare, with Bishop Carmona and Mr. Omlor, that this Vatican II "Church" has nothing whatsoever to do with the true Church of Christ. We cannot identify the church organization of Jorge Bergoglio as the Church without "spot or wrinkle" which is "holy and unspotted" and the "perfect one."

But if anyone still has doubts about if the church organization of Bergoglio is the same thing as the Catholic Church, he doesn't need to take the word of the Totalists for it. All he needs to do is to take his Baltimore Catechism, look the four marks of the Church and see if he finds them in Bergoglio's church. Those four marks are:

> **Why is the Catholic Church one?**
>
> The Catholic Church is one because all its members, according to the will of Christ, profess the same faith, have the same sacrifice and sacraments, and are united under one and the same visible head, the Pope.
>
> **Why is the Catholic Church holy?**
>
> The Catholic Church is holy because it was founded by Jesus Christ, who is all-holy, and because it teaches, according to the will of Christ, holy doctrines, and provides the means of leading a holy life, thereby giving holy members to every age.
>
> **Why is the Catholic Church catholic or universal?**
>
> The Catholic Church is catholic or universal because, destined to last for all time, it never fails to fulfill the divine commandment to teach all nations all the truths revealed by God.
>
> **Why is the Catholic Church apostolic?**
>
> The Catholic Church is apostolic because it was founded by Christ on the apostles and, according to His divine will, has always been governed by their lawful successors.[26]

Obviously the question, if the church organization of Bergoglio is the true Church of Christ or not, is something which no Catholic can remain in doubt. But the true Church always has the answers, and offers the means for her members to solve any doubts which pertain to faith or morals. And for many it might be, that the message of the Totalists, that the church of Bergoglio is a heretic sect, is "a hard saying."[27] But, as Sherlock Holmes once said: "Any truth is better than indefinite doubt."[28]

---

[23] Letter to the Abp. of Chihuahua, Adalbert Almeida, May, 1985.
[24] Eph. 5:22-27
[25] DZ 468.
[26] BC, qq. 156-159.
[27] Cfr. John 6:60.
[28] Arthur Conan Doyle: *The Adventure of the Yellow Face* (1893).

IV. Is Bergoglio Eligible to be Elected Pope?

Another major difference between Thesis and Totalism is the question about if Bergoglio has been elected to receive the papacy. Or, as Fr. Dutertre puts it:

> Where the Thesis disagrees with totalism is in the explanation of *how* these claimants to the papacy were not true popes.[29]

Here is another major difficulty with the Thesis universe, because a normal human mind does not work this way. It would be like if I would ask one of my students to explain in what manner I am not the President of the United States. An average student would probably find this question very confusing, because a normal mind grasps that a person either is the President or he is not.

Nevertheless, in his interview with the *Catholic Family Podcast*, Bishop Sanborn said that yes, a Pope who falls into heresy would *ipso facto* [by the very fact] fall away also from the Church membership. But in order that this falling away from the Church membership have a legal effect, the culprit must be declared guilty by the Church. He gives a long list of theologians, e.g. Cajetan, Billuart, St. Robert Bellarmine, who all say the same as the Thesis, i.e. that in order that Bergoglio not being legally the Pope-elect, he must be declared so by the Church, otherwise he retains designation to the papacy, in a same way as the President-elect of the United States. Some legal body must take the election away, and if it's not taken away, and Bergoglio would convert, he'd become Pope.[30]

But this view is entirely false. As Fr. Cekada has pointed out, it is *divine law* that a person who does not hold the Catholic faith is incapable of being validly elected to receive the papacy.[31] Pope Pius XII teaches in *Mystici Corporis* (1943):

> Actually only those are to be numbered among the members of the Church who have received the laver of regeneration and profess the true faith, and have not, to their misfortune, separated themselves from the structure of the Body, or for very serious sins have not been excluded by lawful authority. - - Nor must one think that the Body of the Church - - is made up during the days of its earthly pilgrimage only of members conspicuous for their holiness, or that it consists only of those whom God has predestined to eternal happiness. - - For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature to sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.[32]



Eligible to receive the presidency? No more or less than Bergoglio to receive the papacy.

We see, therefore, that Pius XII, in no unclear words, teaches that separation from the Catholic Church can happen **either** by excommunication from the part of the Church **or** by one separating himself from her by committing a sin of schism, heresy, or apostasy.

Furthermore, just like the electoral college has the power to elect the President, nevertheless ***neither the papal or presidential electors possess the power to elect whoever they want to***. The electoral college of the United States has strict restrictions, dictated in the Constitution, who is eligible to be elected President. And those constitutional qualifications are, that the President-elect must:

1) Be a natural-born citizen,
2) Be at least 35 years old; and
3) Have resided in the United States for at least 14 years.[33]

Ilhan Omar, Democratic congresswoman from Minnesota, was born is Somalia in 1982, and she is a naturalized citizen of the United States. She is therefore constitutionally ineligible to be elec-

[29] Dutertre 2022a, 1. Emphasis in the original.
[30] https://mhtseminary.libsyn.com/webpage/interview-catholic-family-podcast-interviews-bp-sanborn
[31] "Bergoglio's Got Nothing to Lose" (2014) Cekada 2021c, 244-255
[32] DS 3802-3803.
[33] Article II, Section 1, Clause 5.

ted as President. Even if she would run, would win all 50 states, and be unanimously elected by the Electoral College, no legal election can give her something which she is unable to receive, namely the presidency of the United States.

Similarly, it is false what Fr. Duterte claims, that "undeclared heretics can validly elect and be elected in the Church."[34] As Father Filippo Maroto, a consultant of the Holy Office, who worked in the preparation of the 1917 Code points out, the validity of papal election depends **only upon the divine law**; and those impediments given by divine law render the election of a Roman Pontiff **invalid**. And the qualifications for the elect are that he be:

1) with the use of his reason
2) of the male sex
3) a member of the Church, for which reason infidels, heretics and schismatics cannot be validly elected.[35]

But regarding if Bergoglio is an actual Pope-elect or not, it is completely irrelevant what Bishop Sanborn says, what Fr. Dutertre says, or what Fr. Cekada says, or what I say. In the real world, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who was baptized on 25 December 1936, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and St. Charles Borromeo in Buenos Aires, either

1) is a member of the Catholic Church; or
2) is *not* a member of the Catholic Church.

And that's it. Those are the only two options there is. And if he *is* the member of the Church, he is capable, not only to be *elected* to receive the papacy, but actually *to receive* the papacy.[36]

But if one still holds the Thesis as true, and that a public apostate can be validly elected to receive the papacy, one can just as well claim that Ilhan Omar can be elected to receive the papacy. If the pope-elect can be dispensed from having the Catholic faith and the Church membership, he can just as well be excused from being baptized, or of being the male sex, too. This is a logical conclusion, if one holds that a human law can trump the divine law.

V. Where we get the Pope, then?

In the question how might the Church get a true Pope again, three theories have been suggested:

1) Direct divine intervention
2) An imperfect General Council
3) The Thesis, i.e. conversion of Bergoglio to the true Faith.[37]

We Totalists are often criticized of not taking the problem of Apostolic succession seriously and just saying that "God will solve the crisis." I never understood why is it such a terrible sin to put your hope and trust to God. Bishop Dolan always saw this crisis as a punishment from God for which Catholics need to do reparation, rather than some big problem which man needs to solve. The impatience of getting this "problem" solved reminds me of the Apostles' question to Jesus: "Lord, whether at this time wilt Thou restore the kingdom of Israel?" And He responded: "It is not for you to know times or moments, which the Father hath put in His own power."[38]

The private revelation most quoted for the restoration of the papacy was received by Venerable Elisabetta Canori Mora (1774-1825), who was a professed member from the Third Order of Trinitarians. She once received a vision where St. Peter descended from heaven, dressed in pontifical vestments surrounded by angels, and protected the faithful from the acts of violence. To celebrate the victory over the persecutors and demons, the faithful were led to the feet of St. Peter to make homage to him. St. Peter himself chose new pope who would restore to reorganize the Church and re-establish the religious orders, and this new pope was recognized in every country of the world as the new Vicar of Christ.[39]

So in the divine intervention, St. Peter simply chooses and points out who the new Pope is. And he can very well be someone who already is both validly and legally consecrated Bishop, and there is no need to establish any "new" hierarchy.

The idea of an Imperfect General Council was developed by Cardinal Thomas Cajetan (1469-1534), who says that should the College of Cardi-

[34] Dutertre 2022a, 2.
[35] Maroto 1919, 171-172, #784; Cekada 2021c, 248
[36] Short Explanation of the Thesis.
[37] Cekada 2021a, 383.
[38] Acts 1:6-7.
[39] Herbert 1878, 137-139.

nals become extinct, the right to elect a Pope would devolve to the clergy of Rome, and then to the universal Church.[40] I personally do not support this solution, because the whole concept of an "imperfect General Council is a contradiction of terms; "General Council" by its very definition is "perfect" and in any case, calling together a General Council demands that it is done by the Pope, which is bit of a problem in our days.

But even this idea is better than the Thesis solution, because at least that places the solution to the crisis in the Church in the hands of Catholics, while the Thesis places it in the hands of Bergoglio and his false Bishops, who are heretics and apostates. If we Totalists are blamed or criticized of putting our hope and trust in God, instead of men,[41] we gladly plead guilty as charged.

Conclusion

Bp. Guérard des Lauriers composed his Thesis in the 1970s, when Paul VI was still the papal pretender. Probably in his times, when the parishes and the Vatican itself were still free from idolatry and open acceptance of immorality, the Thesis was still an acceptable explanation to the crisis in the Church. And maybe in the conclaves of 1978, when there were still few valid Cardinals left, and Cardinal Giuseppe Siri was a strong candidate to be elected to receive the papacy, the Novus Ordo structure could have been saved. But in our days, the church organization of Jorge Mario Bergoglio doesn't even vaguely resemble the Catholic Church anymore. And that's why the Thesis is hopelessly outdated in our days. If Bergoglio's church is the Catholic Church, then the true Church could designate a false pope. And if it is not the true Church, then a false Church could designate a true Pope.

Fr. Vili Lehtoranta

West Chester, OH
All Saints, November 1, 2022

Sources

Bainvel, Jean-Vincent
1909 Apostolicité – Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique. Tome I. Deuxième partie. Paris: Letouzey et Ané.

BC
2018 The New Confraternity Edition Revised Baltimore Catechism No. 3. Elkhorn, WI: St. Jerome Library.

Benigni, Umberto
1913 Camerlengo. – The Catholic Encyclopedia. Volume III. New York, NY: The Encyclopedia Press.

Biskupek, Aloysius
1935 Ordinations. A Translation and Explanation of the Rite of Ordination. Techny, IL: Mission Press, S.V.D.

Cekada, Anthony
2021a Don't Get Me Started! Vol. I. Road to Sedevacantism. West Chester, OH: St. Gertrude the Great Church.
2021b Don't Get Me Started! Vol. II. The Controversialist. West Chester, OH: St. Gertrude the Great Church.
2021c Don't Get Me Started! Vol. III. Whatever. West Chester, OH: St. Gertrude the Great Church.

CCL
2001 The 1917 or Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law. Edward N. Peters (ed.) San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.

Despósito, Nicolás E.
2019 The Cassiciacum Thesis. A Brief Exposition. - < https://mostholytrinityseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Cassiciacum-Thesis-2019-Script-Fr-D.pdf >.

DS
1963 Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum.Ed.32.Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder

Dutertre, Damien
2022a On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy. – < https://mostholytrinityseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lack_of_Intention_Dutertre_2022.pdf >.
2022b On the Canonical Crime of Heresy in Relation to the Thesis. – < https://mostholytrinityseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Thesis_Canon_Law_Dutertre_2022.pdf >

DZ
2009 The Sources of Catholic Dogma. Boonville, NY: Preserving Christian Publications.

Herbert, Mary Elizabeth (ed.)
1878 Life Of The Venerable Elizabeth Canori Mora. London: R. Washbourne.

Iribarren, Isabel
2005 Durandus of Saint-Pourçain. A Dominican Theologian in the Shadow of Aquinas. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maroto, Philippo
1919 Institutiones Iuris Canonici ad Normam Novi Codicis. Tomus II. Madrid: Editorial del Corazon de Maria.

Omlor, Patrick Henry
1998 The Robber Church. Stouffville, Canada: Studio Graziano.

Parente, Pietro et al.
1952 Dictionary of Dogmatic Theology. Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company.

Ricossa, Francesco
2016 Pope, Papacy and the Vacant See. – < https://mostholytrinityseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Fr.-Ricossas-article-Pope-Papacy-and-the-Vacant-See.pdf >.

Short Explanation of the Thesis
2021 Short Explanation Why We Reject the Thesis of Guerard des Lauriers. – < http://www.sgg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SHORT-EXPLANATION-WHY-WE-REJECT-THE-THESIS-OF-GUERARD-DES-LAURIERS.pdf >.

[40] Cekada 2021a, 383.

[41] Cfr. Ps. 145:2-3.